United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Bosnian Muslims sign peace documents on map and interim constitutional arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bosnian Serbs decide not to sign; Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference say it is now up to Security Council to decide further steps in peace negotiations.

+ Secretary-General travels to Washington D.C. to meet with United States Secretary of State; will also meet with Secretary-General of Organization of American States to discuss situation in Haiti.

+ Observers sent to Haiti under joint United Nations/OAS Mission begin monitoring human rights situation in different areas; Secretary-General's Special Representative for Haiti continues meetings with political leaders.

+ Iraq asks Security Council to lay down guidelines for coordination of countries' requests for compensation to ensure that no more than 30 per cent is deducted from its oil exports.

+ Kazakhstan will organize conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia from 29 to 30 March in Alma Ata.

+ Netherlands and Australia contribute total of $12 million for FAO field programme in Asia.

+ Committee on Exercise of Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People appeals to Security Council for measures providing "appropriate" protection to Palestinian people.

+ Fifth Committee authorizes additional funding of $200,000 to cover requirements of United Nations Institute for Training and Research through June.

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"A major step forward" in the Bosnian peace talks was taken today, according to Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, when the Bosnian Muslims agreed to sign two documents of the peace agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the map dividing the Republic into ten semi-autonomous provinces and the interim arrangements.

For information media—not an official record

The announcement was made this afternoon by the two Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia at a press conference at Headquarters, following their meeting with President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Vance and Lord Owen regretted that the Bosnian Serbs, led by Radovan Karadzic, had not signed, but expressed the hope that enough pressure would now be put on the Serbs to do so in the near future.

Lord Owen, the European Community Negotiator, said he and Cyrus Vance would present their recommendations to the Secretary-General who would then submit a report to the Security Council. It was now up to the Council to decide what further steps would be taken in the peace negotiations.

The peace agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina is made up of four separate documents. Two of them, on the constitutional principles and the military agreement, have been signed by all three parties. The two remaining documents, on the map and the interim arrangement, have been signed by the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Muslims.

At a press conference this afternoon, President Izetbegovic said his delegation had signed the documents on the condition that the signatures would become "nul and void", if "the agressor" did not sign the same documents within a reasonable time frame. He added that if the peace accords remained without results, the Bosnian Presidency and its Government would take all necessary measures to defend its people and expect the Security Council to lift the arms embargo on the Republic.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this afternoon left New York for Washington D.C. to meet with the United States Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, according to a United Nations spokesman today.

The Secretary-General was also scheduled to meet with the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Baena Soares, to discuss the situation in Haiti. Later in the evening, Mr. Boutros-Ghali would address guests on "Maintaining International Peace and Security -- the United Nations as a Forum and Focal Point" at a dinner hosted by the Association of American Publishers.

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Some 45 of the 103 human rights observers currently deployed under the joint United Nations/Organization of American States (OAS) Mission to initiate investigations of human rights violations in Haiti, were already operational in many areas of the country, according to the spokesman for the Mission today. In the coming weeks, more observers were expected to join the groups already in place.

(more)

The observers had started collecting files on the human rights violations in Haiti for further review and follow-up, which would include contacts and visits to local authorities, prisons, hospitals and morgues, the spokesman said.

Yesterday, Dante Caputo, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Haiti, held a series of meetings with leaders of the political parties in Haiti in pursuit of a solution to the political conflict in that country. Mr. Caputo also met for the second time with General Raoul Cedras and other members of the Haitian Armed Forces.

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Iraq has lodged a protest over "certain companies and individuals" who, it says, have taken cases to their national courts claiming compensation for damage suffered as a result of the Persian Gulf war, instead of seeking recourse to the United Nations Compensation Fund.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Said Al-Sahaf said those cases were aiming at Iraq's assets and reserves abroad, which would eventually result in negative repercussions on Iraq economy.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister asked that the Security Council lay down guidelines to coordinate international and local requests for compensation in order to make sure that no more than 30 per cent was deducted from Iraq's oil export to pay for compensation, as determined under resolution 705 (1991).

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Kazakhstan will organize a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia from 29 to 30 March in Alma Ata.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, Akmaral K. Arystanbekova, said representatives of the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) are expected to attend, as well as experts of various Asian countries. Kazakhstan had proposed the establishment of a collective-security system in Asia similar to the CSCE, because it believes that the States of the continent have an equal interest in durable and lasting peace and stability, the letter said.

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The Netherlands will contribute about $9 million to a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) field programme in Asia, and Australia is expected to pledge an additional $3 million, the FAO announced today in Rome.

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The programme aims at boosting rice production while reducing the use of pesticides in Asia. The contributions made by Netherlands and Australia will be used mainly for educating trainers in the fields, relying mostly on existing local facilities.

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The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has appealed to the Security Council to take necessary measures which would provide "appropriate" protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention and the relevant Council resolutions.

Committee Chairman Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General, said that since the deportation of over 400 Palestinians by Israel last December, there had been a rise in clashes between Israeli soldiers and the Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Describing the situation as "grave" due to the intensification of "repressive" measures by Israel, he said that since mid-December about 50 Palestinians had been shot and killed in street disturbances -- a death rate not seen in several years. Most of the casualties, at least 15 deaths in the month of March, had been in the Gaza Strip and a large proportion of the victims were children under the age of 16, he added.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has decided that the Secretary-General should be given a 'commitment' authority for an additional funding of $200,000 to cover the requirements of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) until June.

Continuing its review of the 1992-1993 programme budget at Headquarters today, the Committee also decided that the Institute's actual requirements be reported in the context of the 1992-1993 annual performance report. The Committee was acting on the programme budget implications of a resolution by which the Assembly decided to transfer UNITAR's headquarters to Geneva.

The Committee decided that the funding of UNITAR's administrative budget and training programme be covered from voluntary contributions and other extra-budgetary means. Furthermore, it decided that the UNITAR building in New York be immediately transferred to the United Nations in return for cancellation of the Institute's debt and coverage of its 1992 financial obligations.

The Committee also decided, without a vote, to recommend to the General Assembly that it approve a commitment authority of $150,000 in order to provide for the administrative support of the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament.

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